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The Lunatic Fringe

Intelligent, level-headed anti-Communist efforts in the United States are being hurt much more than helped by a lunatic fringe of Red-baiters.

This is the view of a Chicago conservative who backed away from joining a group called the John Birch Society, a group currently enraged in a militant anti-Communist campaign throughout the country.

The current issue of *Time* magazine reports that the rightwing group's activities are under the dictatorial direction of a hard-boiled New Englander, one Robert Welch. The retired Belmont, Mass., businessman founded the John Birch Society in 1958. *Time* reports, after boning up on Communist literature and deciding that such programs as Social Security and federal income tax laws were part of a Red plot to ready the U. S. for Soviet conquest:

Society members shun personal publicity, take orders from society headquarters, and promote Communist-style front organizations that do not use the John Birch name. Birch, incidentally, was a U. S. Navy captain who was killed by Chinese Communist guerillas.

Carefully avoiding normal channels of political action, the society accepts the dictatorial direction of one man who sees democracy as a 'perennial fraud' and estimates that the U. S. is 40-60 per cent Communist-controlled, the magazine says.

Some of Dictator Welch's views:

--The Eisenhower brothers: "... Milton Eisenhower is actually Dwight Eisenhower's superior and boss within the Communist Party... For (the former President), there is only one possible word to describe his purposes and actions. That word is treason."

--Central Intelligence Agency Director Allen Dulles: "The most protected and un-touchable supporter of Communism, next to Eisenhower himself, in Washington."

--The late John Foster Dulles: "A Communist agent."

Top current project of the John Birch "Americanists"—as they call themselves—is the impeachment of Chief Justice Earl Warren. They circulate petitions and send a rash of letters to newspapers urging Warren's impeachment.

Time reported that in Wichita, four student members of the society are required to tell their cell leader of any "Communist influence noted in classroom lectures by phone. Teachers, labor leaders, teachers' leaders and principal for apologies and admissions of guilt. A Wichita businessman who planned to contribute to a University of Wichita fund was threatened because members of the society were demanding that certain professors and books be thrown out. "My business would be wrecked," he said. "If those people got on the phone and kept on yelling that I am a Communist because I give money to the school."

According to *Time*, many conservatives object to the society's contempt for dissent from its views, feel that its militant words and thoughts are barely a goose step away from formation of goon squads.

One Chicago conservative was quoted: "This is the kind of thing that does violence to everything we're trying to accomplish. It siphons a lot of well-meaning, respectable people off into a lunatic fringe... at the same time giving anti-Communist efforts a black eye. It hurts us much more than it helps us." He is so right.